

APRIL 21, 1965

APRIL 1, 1965.

President LYNDON B. JOHNSON,  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
Washington, D.C.

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Mr. President: I write to register my disapproval of our actions and policy in Vietnam. I have read and heard your statements on the subject. I am familiar with the last white paper released by the State Department. I am saturated with all the justifications put forward by our Defense Department, Members of Congress, and various and sundry advocates of this course. But I also have researched the history of that area and our involvement there.

What a tragic story it is: From the unenlightened French colonial exploitation, to the rise of the nationalist movement under Ho Chi Minh, to the Japanese occupation, to the duplicity of the British General Gracey after World War II, to the vain efforts of the French and their duplicity in trying to replace the yoke of colonialism on Vietnam by means of puppet regimes—yes, right down to our fanatical anticommunism as espoused and promulgated by John Foster Dulles. His was the warped view of the world which put us into a struggle on the wrong side with the French and their puppets and it has been the political cowardice of three Presidents which has kept us there.

I wonder if you, Mr. President, and the policymakers ever bothered to read the history of the Vietnamese struggle to rid themselves of the exploitation of Western man. If we had more historians and fewer CIA people and State Department "hard nosers" making policy we might not find ourselves the "last French colonialist in Indochina."

I heard your press conference on Saturday March 20, and your reiteration of policy on Vietnam and I can only say that whether it was started 10 years ago or 110 years ago, whether it was the policy of 3 Presidents or 33 Presidents, and whether you repeat it 47 times or 147 times—it still doesn't make it right.

The people of this country do not support this hideous little war of napalm and massive bombardments and U.S. official propaganda, but they have become so intellectually lethargic with affluence that they cannot bestir themselves to give loud voice to their disapproval. They assuage their consciences with the balm of anticommunism.

Have we come to the point where anything is justifiable in the name of anticommunism? When I consider that after World War II and just prior to its ending, Vietnam was a unified and independent nation from northernmost to southernmost boundaries—when I consider that Bao Dai had relinquished his throne in support of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh government and wrote De Gaulle asking that the French not persist in reclaiming these colonies; then I go on to find that the United States came into this struggle on the side of the French, then the Diem regime, and that it was officially stated policy during Dulles' secretaryship to back Diem's refusal to hold elections in accord with the 1954 Geneva agreements—that we built up Diem's army, again in violation of the 1954 Geneva agreement—and now we have to listen to our officials saying that North Vietnam must show its willingness to live up to those 1954 agreements—I can only say, what hypocrisy. Why should the Vietnamese respect the artificial 17th parallel imposed on them by others, yes, even Russia and China along with the Western Powers.

In closing let me say I am ashamed of my Government. I do not support the President. I believe we shall fail in this effort because we do not have right on our side.

With regret,

Mrs. CATHERINE L. MINK.

BALTIMORE, MD.